

MINUTES SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING Via Zoom Conference Call FRI., OCTOBER 23, 2020

Earline opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bishop Jim Gonia, VP Earline Bohling, Secy. Susan Mitchell, Treas. Julie Reusser, Ray Ferry, Debra Frank Dew, Pr. Julie Brooks, Todd Herreid, Deacon Mary Stoneback, Pr. Daniel Tisdell, Jody Brammer-Hoelter, Susan Sharkey, Pr. Eric Allert, Kenny LaJoy, Pr. Matthew Weber, Jeff Fairfax, Abel Salazar, Terry Cole

MEMBERS ABSENT: Megan Pierce

STAFF PRESENT: Kurt Rager, Pr. Dana Peterson, Pr. Leslie O’Callaghan, Kristen Lee, Tina Kvitek, Deniece Estrada, Deacon Erin Power, Peter Severson, Pr. Sarah Moening, Pr. Kent Mueller

Opening Devotions – Bishop Jim

Video with Alicia Keys song “Good Job”

Breakout Rooms – Small Groups discussed one thing each person is passionate about

Closed with Psalm 19 and video – nature photos and The Blessing – singing, New Zealand version

Consent Agenda Changes:

Approve On Leave from Call – Rev. Deb Cote, Prince of Peace, Gillette, WY

Approve On Leave from Call – Rev. Jeff Hanson, First St. Paul, Burlington, CO

Approve Extended Call – Rev. Catherine Lemons, Trinity Lutheran, Las Cruces, NM

Approve 2-Year Term Call – Rev. Rebecca Aardahl, Ascension/St. Matthew’s, Price, UT

Approval of the Consent Agenda with Changes –

Jody moved, seconded by Abel, to approve the Consent Agenda with Changes. **Motion Carried.**

Video with Rev. Ben Hogue, Reformation Lutheran Church, Washington, DC – named California Lutheran University’s 2020 Outstanding Young Alumni. His home congregation is Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Grand Junction, CO.

Update on Sky Ranch Camp –

The wildfires are still active in the camp area, but none of the camp structures have burned. There have been places like outdoor worship areas and activity areas that have burned. All staff members have been evacuated for 71 days. The Cameron Peak Fire is still nearby. The East Troublesome Fire is now a major concern in the Estes Park area. Shepherd of the Mountains is in the evacuation area.

Changes to our Covenant –

Terry Cole moved, seconded by Kenny, to change the word Him to God to make the language gender neutral. **Motion Carried.**

Continuing Resolution for the Rocky Mountain Synod Constitution –

The Synod Parliamentarian Kirby Glad drafted a Continuing Resolution which will allow the Synod Assembly to hold a virtual assembly in May, 2021. It will be placed in Chapter 7 – and codified as S7.11.A20. Todd moved, seconded by Julie Brooks, to approve this Continuing Resolution. A 2/3 vote of Synod Council is required. **Motion Carried.**

Approval of New Policies –

- Veteran Servant Corps – viewed a video
- Creation Care Team
- Rocky Mountain Synod Gift Policy

Ray moved, seconded by Kenny to recognize the Veteran Servant Corps as a self-organizing team for the Rocky Mountain Synod. **Motion Carried.**

Abel moved, seconded by Matthew, to recognize the Creation Care Team as a self-organizing team for the Rocky Mountain Synod. **Motion Carried.**

Ray moved, seconded by Debra, to approve the Rocky Mountain Synod Gift Policy. **Motion Carried.**

Video on Messiah Mountain Retreat Center – shown to all present

Break 10:25 – 11:00 a.m.

Julie Reusser discussed the Staff Health Plan that was approved in the Consent Agreement, adding more detail. It has been recommended that the Synod offer the Silver Plus A Plan, which includes an HSA Plan for those who want it, and there is the option for a staff member to choose the Gold Plan if preferred. Julie R. moved, seconded by Ray, to offer the Silver Plus A Plan to RMS staff members. **Motion Carried.**

EiL Video – Excellence in Leadership – shown to all present

Officer Reports: Written reports were submitted by the Officers

Report of Bishop Jim Gonia

Highlights: There is major restructuring underway at Churchwide. This is intended to flatten the structure and make more inter-connectivity. But, 20% of the staff will lose their positions.

Report of Vice President Earline Bohling

Highlights: The VPs of Region 2 meet monthly on Zoom for discussion and collaboration. She held 3 orientations on Zoom for the newly-elected synod council members. Attended the Theological Conference.

Report of Secretary Susan Mitchell

Highlights: Congregations are continuing to work on amending their constitutions, and we are able to assist them in a timely manner.

Report of Treasurer Julie Reusser

Audit for the fiscal year ended January 31, 2020 has been completed. We had a clean opinion and received several suggestions on how to improve our operations. Regarding the fiscal year in progress, mission support from the congregations has been tracking with the prior year as of the end of September. Expenses are slightly under budget, helped by the curtailment of travel. We are running an operating loss year to date, as was anticipated, but have so far not seen significant downturn caused by the pandemic.

Compensation Guidelines –

Julie Brooks, a member of the Committee to update the RMS Compensation Guidelines, presented the report, acknowledging the work of Pr. Daniel Smith for his work on all the spreadsheets. After the council heard the report, Bishop Jim moved to amend the compensation guidelines to level the starting base salary for deacons and pastors at \$50,000. Bp. Jim moved, seconded by Deacon Mary, to approve the guidelines with this amendment. Discussion followed. Eric wants to send the report back to committee for re-consideration with a deacon added to the team. Eric moved, seconded by Matthew, to table the motion until October 24th, tomorrow's synod council meeting. Council members were polled, and 15 voted to table the motion, with appreciation for the work done on the compensation guidelines. **The motion was tabled.**

Video – The Lutheran Center – shown to all present.

12:40 – 1:30 p.m. Break for Lunch

Request from Earline:

In order to prepare for elections that will be held at the May 2021 Synod Assembly, a Nominating Committee needs to be formed by November. This will be publicized, but Earline is asking for volunteers to contact her.

Staff Reports: Written reports were submitted by all Staff, and some gave oral highlights.

Deacon Erin Power: Highlights – Updated synod council on the synod assembly schedule for future locations. Embassy Suites in Loveland, CO, has graciously allowed RMS to cancel the 2021 contract with no penalty. To show our appreciation, Erin is recommending a change in the future assembly locations as follows:

2021 – Digital (no change)

2022 – El Paso (no change)

2023 – Embassy Suites, Loveland, CO

2024 – Embassy Suites, Loveland, CO

Terry Cole moved, seconded by Matthew, to approve the above revision to the Synod Assembly locations.

Motion Carried.

Pr. Dana Peterson, Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM): Highlights: He reviewed the new and redeveloping congregations, our mission sites, so we will know them. He explained his hope for restructuring how the funding for his position and the mission sites happens between Churchwide and the Rocky Mountain Synod.

Pr. Sarah Moening: Highlights: Explained the importance of Emotional Intelligence for leadership and gave us book titles.

Pr. Kent Mueller: Highlights: the Next Faithful Steps: Better Together Campaign of the RMS. Stressed the importance of getting 100% participation of the synod council and staff for the synod's campaign.

Pr. Leslie O'Callaghan: See written report.

Peter Severson: See written report.

Kurt Rager: See written report.

3:00 p.m. – Video: 3E – Educate, Equip, Enact – shown to all present

Election of 2 members of the Executive Committee of Synod Council –

Rostered Member: Pr. Julie Brooks re-elected by acclamation

Lay Member: Todd Herreid and Terry Cole offered to serve. Terry Cole elected.

Discussion of Synod Council Training on Anti-racism/Equity, Diversity/Inclusion –

Bishop Jim gave us names of potential trainers and specific topics he is considering. There are no firm plans at this time, but consideration is being given to an intensive day and a half training.

Video – Veggie Tale - shown to all present.

Small Group Discussions held in Breakout Rooms – reactions to the video were shared.

Closing Prayer offered by Earline

Video – Street Kyrie – shown by Kent to all present

Earline adjourned the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Mitchell

Rocky Mountain Synod Secretary

Earline opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

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MEMBERS ABSENT: Megan Pierce, Jeff Fairfax, Todd Herreid

STAFF PRESENT: Kurt Rager, Pr. Dana Peterson, Pr. Leslie O’Callaghan, Kristen Lee, Tina Kvitek, Deacon Erin Power, Peter Severson, Pr. Sarah Moening, Pr. Kent Mueller, Pr. Michael Tassler, Pr. Ron Beckman

Kent, Terry and Susan Mitchell led opening devotions, beginning with a video, scripture readings and prayer. Bishop Jim and Earline served communion, naming each person as they received the bread and wine.

Next Faithful Steps Campaign Update –

Pr. Ron Beckman showed the dashboard report with total pledges of \$336,853.00 plus an Estate Gift that will be approximately \$200,000. Cash received to date: \$214,251.00. He outlined how the plans have had to pivot because of the pandemic. In-person cultivation events were changed to Zoom presentations with videos.

3E (Educate, Equip, Enact) Report on the Lilly Foundation 2nd Grant –

Pr. Michael Tassler reported how his team is focusing on the joys and surprises of doing their work. Highlights: Deb Elstad wrote an online course titled “Beginning a Culture of Generosity”. A refresher course for SAS (Stewardship for All Seasons) is being used as a second year SAS curriculum. He shared a PowerPoint on Ministerial Excellence Fund and Stewardship results in the Phase II grant, our second Lilly grant. The \$1 million dollar Lilly Grant is in partnership with the Grand Canyon Synod. \$700,000 will be expended in the Rocky Mountain Synod, and \$300,000 will be expended in the Grand Canyon Synod. Every dollar must be matched in order to give out the grants. We also heard about the work of the newest pillar of the grant: Vital Right-Shaped Ministry.

Messiah Mountain Retreat Center Update –

Pr. Leslie O’Callaghan, member of the Advisory Board, reported that all summer bookings were cancelled while protocols to make the Center as safe as possible during the pandemic were put into place. Work is being planned to make Messiah Mountain a place where White Supremacy could be discussed and where we could meet with other groups. Most written policies for the operation of MMR have been updated. The Board meets regularly to do visioning of the property. A new furnace is being purchased, and a snow blade has been purchased for snow removal. Bp. Jim added that the Board is discussing how MMR could be a safe space for small groups to go in the time of pandemic. They are talking with Carmen Retzlaff, who may be a visionary resource person as work is done to explore possibilities for the future of Messiah Mountain Retreat Center. Reservations must be made on the MMR website when anyone wants to come to the Retreat Center.

EiL – Excellence in Leadership Update –

Pr. Sarah Moening highlighted her report stating Emotional Intelligence is a framework for God calling us into the future. She told us about the work of EiL Trainers –Pr. Dana Peterson and Pr. Julie Brooks, as well as 2 new Trainers Will Johnson and Tina Kvitek.

The Lutheran Center Update –

Pr. Kent Mueller talked about the need to pivot with the plans for uses of The Lutheran Center because of the pandemic and also because the Growing Home Program is no longer using our space. He shared his vision for Anti-racism programming and music and the other fine arts programming that could be done in our space. He reported that bids are out for replacing the parking lot at The Lutheran Center, a much-needed improvement that must be done soon. Bp. Jim added that we are moving in the direction of seeking a property manager to make sure that hands-on care of the property and safety of the staff are addressed.

Campaign Tithe Taskforce –

The Taskforce will develop a plan for how the additional funds raised, the tithe above the goals of the Campaign, would be spent. The desire is to use the tithe for the work of anti-racism in the Synod. Earline has two volunteers for this work, Debra and Jody. She would like to hear from one more volunteer.

Resignations from Synod Council -

Earline read the resignation letter from Pr. Terry Schjang and reported that Bishop Jim had received a letter of resignation from Pr. Reba Kiger-Kolasch. Earline stated that we will seek to replace these positions by appointing persons who would then be voted on by Synod Council. We are encouraged to send recommendations for 2 synod council members to Bp. Jim or Earline.

11:00 – 11:15 a.m. – Break

Tabled Motion – Compensation Guidelines -

A motion regarding the compensation guidelines report was tabled yesterday, and Earline wanted the council to put Bp. Jim's motion back on the table, to accept the compensation guidelines as presented except with deacons' and pastors' base salaries being the same--\$50,000. Additional discussion by the council took place. Abel called the question, but his motion failed for lack of a second. After more discussion, Kenny called the question. This motion passed, and ended discussion. Earline polled the synod council votes on the compensation guidelines motion, and with eleven yes votes and 2 abstain votes and 1 no vote, the **Motion Carried**.

Conversation about the May 2020 Zoom Synod Assembly Balloting –

Kenny raised questions about how voters could have more biographical information on the ballots at Assembly to have a more fair election. Earline led discussion, and Kenny will talk with Deacon Erin and the committee planning the 2021 Assembly.

A discussion to be led by Peter Severson on the topic of the ELCA Social Statement Sexism will be postponed until a later date.

Synod Council worship leaders for the February 5-6 winter meeting –

Mary, Kenny and Ray volunteered.

Bishop Jim felt we should postpone the scheduling for anti-racism training for the Council until more information has been gathered.

Terry Cole and Susan Mitchell offered closing prayers.

Kent showed the video "Resilience"

Earline adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Mitchell

Rocky Mountain Synod Secretary